

Elizabeth Held
5204 11th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55417

July 14, 2003

Council Member Natalie Johnson Lee
Chair, Health and Human Services Committee
350 South 5th Street, Room 307
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Council Member Johnson Lee:

Subject: July 14, 2003 Public Hearing

My entire family lives in the City of Minneapolis and we love it because of its commitment to the quality of life residents enjoy. This makes Minneapolis uniquely appealing.

The decline of the City's commitment to human services and the health of Minneapolis residents is sad for us to watch. As a third generation working in health and human services, the City's plan to eliminate its investment is especially poignant. My Dad Joe completed his 30-year career in public health managing the Women and Infant Children nutrition program. During the Swine Flu epidemic, he along with other City Health employees immunized Minneapolis residents who were waiting in a line that wound around the block from the Public Health Center. My Grandma Held, a Jewish immigrant from Romania, volunteered. She walked downtown everyday from her North Minneapolis apartment to baby-sit the kids waiting for their moms at the Clinic. I also remember Dad bringing families' home to go through our things and take what could be used. This generosity still occurs today. City service providers gather and donate new and used kitchen, bath and bedding items, clothing and even furniture for people we come in contact with daily who are experiencing hard times. Choosing not to invest in health and human services will result in cuts to valuable services and valuable human resources for Minneapolis residents.

In addition, Minneapolis loses 3.8 million in State and Federal funds when it does not invest a minimum of 2.6 million of its local dollars. I'm also not convinced the County and State are in a fiscal position to ensure care to residents and without local controls over allocation of funds, where would the County and State put their limited resources?

I understand times are lean and we must prioritize. However, if we invest all our energy and finances into putting out fires of human crisis through emergency response systems, our quality of life will most certainly decline. I have yet to hear it summed up better than in a favorite quote from a visionary leader.

“A peaceful and harmonious and law-abiding community comes only when people live in conditions which are conducive to normal and healthy community relations. There is a direct relationship between a high level of employment at decent wages and a respect for law. There is a direct relationship between good housing, adequate parks and playgrounds, progressive schools, modern library facilities, and respect for the laws and ordinances of this city.”

Mayor Hubert H Humphrey
Inaugural Address, July 3, 1945

Clearly, more than a half century later, we must understand how critical human services are to the health of our City. I urge you and your colleagues to reconsider the City's 5-year plan to eliminate general funding to the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Held